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SUBJECT: INSECURITY IN GUEREDA

REF: NDJAMENA 1028

11. (SBU) Summary: The town of Guereda, a hub for services to five Sudanese refugee camps in Eastern Chad, has experienced escalating insecurity since July 2006. In the most recent incident, the U.S.-funded NGO International Medical Corps (IMC) suffered a major theft and violent assault on national and expatriate staff. During meeting with donors, NGO,s and UN agencies, the former Chadian Minister for Territorial Administration, Mahamat Ali Nassour, noted that Government of Chad resources had been tied up defending Chad,s territorial integrity from hostile forces in Sudan; but with the recent agreement renewing diplomatic ties with Sudan, the GOC would be better positioned to confront the "bandits" responsible for vehicle theft and other assaults in the East. He also promised that recruitment in the refugee camps would cease. End Summary.

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ATTACK ON NGO IN GUEREDA  
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12. (U) On August 4, 2006 the IMC compound in Guereda came under attack by seven bandits. The incident occurred around 1945 while most of the expatriate staff were eating dinner in the guesthouse dining room. The IMC doctor walked outside and was confronted by three men dressed in military uniform. The men pointed guns at the doctor and forced him to lie on the ground while the other assailants went into the dining room and instructed the other staff members to do the same. One of the bandits asked for the finance director, by name, and then ordered him to open the safe while the others were held at gunpoint. As this robbery was taking place, one of the female staff members was coming out of her room, and was grabbed by the assailants. In response to her resistance, the assailants hit her in the head with one of their guns and forced her on the ground with the others. The finance director asked the finance officer to open the safe, at which time the bandits absconded with approximately 50,000 USD, money that was to pay staff salaries. After the bandits left, the staff members searched the compound and discovered that the individuals had entered the compound by removing the barbed wire from the surrounding wall. The IMC staff immediately called the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) security to report the incident.

13. (U) During the incident, three staff members were injured, one of them, the female staff member who was hit in the head, had to be medically evacuated to the French hospital in Abeche for a skull fracture. IMC decided to down-size activities and reduce staff by sending eight expatriates to Abeche and leaving four in Guereda to ensure minimal

activities on the ground. The day after the incident, and only a few hours before the expatriates were to evacuate by road to Abeche, the local authorities arrived at the compound and individually questioned the finance director and finance officer. A few hours later the Secretary General (SG) for Guerreda arrived and demanded documents that authorized IMC to relocate and suspend operations. The SG also asserted that IMC had evacuated the injured woman without his approval. The SG requested that the finance director and finance officer go to the police station to sign their statements. The whole relocation convoy moved to the police office in hopes that the papers could be signed and they could continue on to Abeche. A few hours later the local authorities informed the staff members that the finance director was being questioned and that the finance officer still had to be re-interviewed. IMC eventually decided to evacuate its staff members via an Airserv flight to Abeche.

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GOC OFFICIAL ADDRESSES INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY  
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¶4. (U) On August 10, at the request of the newly-arrived UNHCR Country Representative, the former Chadian Minister of Territorial Administration, Mahamat Ali Nassour, met with donors, NGO,s and UN agencies to discuss the security situation in Eastern Chad. Nassour stated that the Government recognized the vulnerability of humanitarian workers in the east, but pointed out that the resumption of diplomatic ties with Sudan would change the security environment. Chad would now be able to pursue the "bandits" across the border into Sudan. Furthermore a new strategy was being devised to support humanitarian operations, including recruiting new gendarmes, providing better communication to

NDJAMENA 00001071 002 OF 002

security forces and procuring a small airplane to perform reconnaissance on the border. The Minister admitted that enhanced security measures would require the international community's support.

¶5. (U) Following Nassour's presentation, IMC Country Director Frederick Royce stated that IMC was under attack by the Chadian military, with the complicity of the local authorities and population. We have more to fear from the authorities, he argued, than from other sources, and cannot look to them for assistance. In response, the Minister acknowledged that certain individuals implicated in the attacks may have procured Chadian uniforms, but that they were not associated with the Chadian military. He announced that a new Prefect had been named for Guerreda and expressed his view that this individual would be able to do a better job of ensuring security than his predecessor. He also stated that he hoped to send up to 75 additional gendarmes to Guerreda.

¶6. (U) In other exchanges, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) noted that local authorities often pressured organizations to hire their family members who were not qualified. As a result, the issue of employment of local staff had become an irritant between NGO,s and the community. Better communication between the Chadian authorities in N,djamena and local authorities concerning the roles and responsibilities of the humanitarian organizations and the host communities and local authorities was urgently needed. The representative for the French cooperation agency noted that impunity was rampant: in most cases malefactors were known to the authorities, but were never apprehended. He also pointed out that recruitment in the refugee camps and among the local population by members of Sudanese rebel movements opposing the signature of the Darfur Peace Accords was a serious problem. In response to these comments, the Minister stated that "a blind eye may have been turned to this activity before, but it will not continue." U.S. representative (DCM) noted the recent USG contribution to UNHCR to support enhanced security measures,

and reiterated that without the cooperation of the Chadian authorities at the national and local level additional security measures would not be effective.

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UNHCR EXPRESSES CONCERN  
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17. (U) UNHCR,s internal report on the security situation pointed out that the administration of Guereda was Zaghawa, and that a climate of complete impunity for Zaghawas existed in the town. According to this report, the regime's primary interest in Guereda is keeping an eye on the Tama (given the close proximity of the Tama rebellion led by Mahamat Nour across the border). Similarly the regime had no interest in putting an end to recent intra-Tama/Goran conflict which had left over 40 individuals dead (reftel). The new Prefect named by Nassour is also Zaghawa and reported to be - like his predecessor - illiterate. UNHCR field security officer Elias Forsung, who conducted an assessment of the security situation in Guereda, told Economic/Consular officer on August 10 that the recent attack against the IMC may in fact be an attempt to force the international community out of the area to more discreetly permit attacks against the Tama population.

18. (SBU) Comment: The presence of the Minister of Territorial Administration at a meeting with donors was widely welcomed as a good first step in raising awareness at the highest levels in the Chadian government of the need to take stronger measures to restore a measure of security for humanitarian workers in the east. Nonetheless participants privately expressed concerns that assurances were one thing - results still needed to be seen. Furthermore, the recent cabinet reshuffle, in which moved Nassour out of his position as Minister of Territorial Administration, may hinder efforts to augment security in the refugee camps.  
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